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ABSTRACT

The Namibian Extension Unit (NEU), a distance education program for Namibian refugees in Zambia and Angola, was established in 1981 and began teaching courses in mid-1982. Its purpose is to provide basic education to adult Namibian refugees using the distance education format. The NEU provides courses in study skills, introductory English and basic mathematics; courses in agriculture, child care and nutrition, personal hygiene and community health, and secondary school English are being prepared. NEU distance learning activities are carried out in study centers throughout Angola and Zambia, under field supervisors for each country. Part-time tutors are employed to help the students in their studies; they are assisted by study group leaders--students a few courses ahead who are responsible for classroom procedures and helping students with lessons. NEU course materials are produced in writers' workshops organized by the Unit. NEU staff and teachers from Namibian Health and Education Centres help in the writing, and international experts and consultants also participate. The NEU is autonomous within the United Nations Institute for Namibia, and is overseen by a Board of Project Management. Financial assistance is provided by a variety of international sources. Approximately 165 employees work in the study centers to serve about 2,000 students; both figures are expected to rise as more of the target population of 40,000 Namibian refugees with at least four years of primary schooling are reached. (KC)

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NAMIBIAN EXTENSION UNIT

A Brief Account of the Distance Education Programme for Namibians

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A Group Leader conducting his class:
Kwanza-Sul, Angola.

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Introduction

Towards the mid-seventies, South Africa intensified her colonial war of repression in Namibia, resulting in many people being arrested and tortured. Thousands fled across the frontier into Angola. Many remained in Angola, but still others crossed into Zambia.

In the late seventies, thousands more refugees were forced to leave for the two neighbouring countries of Angola and Zambia.

Today these destitute people reside in refugee centres created and run by SWAPO. They work on the land provided for them by the host Governments. They build their own houses and run their own institutions.

As these people came from a colonial country where education for the Africans is inadequate and of poor quality as a result of Apartheid, one finds that only a small percentage had completed primary school. Thousands are either semi-illiterate or illiterate. However, the SWAPO Education infrastructure could not cater for thousands of children and adults at the same time.

For that reason, it was felt that an alternative to formal education for adults had to be found fast.

An extra-mural programme for adults was considered preferable and practicable. So the Namibian Extension Unit, a distance education programme for Namibian refugees, was formally established on November 5, 1981. Actual courses were launched in mid 1982 after much preparation involving SWAPO, the International Extension College and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Commonwealth Programme for Namibians was established by Heads of Government at their 1975 meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, when they also offered to welcome an independent Namibia into the Commonwealth. Through the programme, education and training opportunities are provided to Namibians who have left their country for political reasons. In an effort to maximise the number of Namibians assisted from available funds, the Secretariat co-operated with SWAPO, the United Nations Commission for Namibia, the United

Nations Institute for Namibia and the Zambian Government in developing a distance learning scheme for Namibians in Angolan and Zambian refugee settlements.

Today the Namibian Extension Unit is a fully fledged programme dedicated to effect change within the shortest possible time.

Purpose and Programme Objectives

The NEU was established in order to meet the following objectives.

a) By using distance teaching methods, the NEU provides educational services to adult Namibian refugees through printed materials augmented by narrow-casting (audio cassettes) and simple visual aids.

b) The NEU organises courses in refugee centres for tutors, field supervisors and group leaders on the skills of group leadership, group dynamics and distance teaching methodology.

c) The NEU seeks to broaden the scope, magnitude and depth of its courses so as to include relevant courses in practical and vocational skills.

d) The NEU undertakes to upgrade its existing courses and to buy courses from other recognised distance teaching institutions so as to cater for the more advanced students.

e) And the NEU seeks to form a nucleus of an extra-mural studies unit within the educational system in an independent Namibia. This would help to produce skilled manpower in order to meet Namibia's manpower needs, a pre-requisite for national reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Courses

As a distance education institution, established in order to provide education for adult refugees in centres, the NEU writes, edits and prints course materials and the accompanying aids. Prior to the launching of our intitial courses, a series of induction and training workshops to introduce learning materials and distance teaching approaches to tutors, group leaders and field supervisors was organised.

Due to the poor educational system in Namibia, the majority of our students were unable to benefit from the initial courses (English and Basic Mathematics). The NEU therefore found it necessary and advisable to produce a crash programme course to boost the morale of the majority of students who were inhibited by the level of the original courses.

At present the Unit offers the following courses.

a) Study Skills Course: This is NEU's Primary course. It aims at inculcating good study habits and confidence in the students. All would-be students of the NEU must take this course prior to their undertaking of other study materials. It is also a valuable companion to the group leader, tutor and field supervisor. The course is considerably shorter than main courses and it only takes two or three weeks to complete.

b) Introductory English Course: This is NEU's course proper. It aims at providing basic everyday vocabulary and English language structure to students, and initiates the students into the world of the English Course that follows. Simple Mathematical calculations are included throughout the course books.

c) The English and Basic Mathematics Courses: These are the two initial courses launched by the Unit in 1982. The main objective of these courses was to provide remedial and upgrading linguistic and numeracy skills to adult refugees who have had at least four and half years of primary schooling. These courses are not terminal in themselves but could act as an introduction to more advanced work at such Colleges as the Selly Oak Colleges of Birmingham (UK), United Nations Institute for Namibia, United Nations Vocational Training College, Angola and others.

d) Junior Secondary Mathematics Course: This new course is designed to cater for students who have completed the Basic Mathematics as well as "advanced" students who had acquired basic education at Namibia Health and Education Centres or elsewhere.

The NEU courses are augmented by Audio Cassettes.

It is hoped that by upgrading more of our courses in this way, the Unit can avoid borrowing and buying-in advanced courses from other distance teaching institutions.

Courses in Preparation

- Agriculture

- Child Care and Nutrition

- Personal Hygiene and Community Health

- Secondary School English

These courses, we hope, will go a long way in helping to prepare the Namibian people for a new life in rural communities after a protracted struggle for freedom and justice. The courses will instil into the people skills and competences needed to cope with life and tame the wild and violent environment which will be the legacy of a long colonial war, in independent Namibia.

Future Courses

As well as upgrading existing courses, the Unit will endeavour to write more courses on various subjects as students' needs may arise. But most of the courses will be of a practical and vocational nature. Courses in carpentry, bricklaying, pottery, plumbing, tailoring, commerce and acountancy may be among the future courses to be produced by the NEU.

All the courses, present and future, are to be conducted through distance teaching approaches. As far as possible the three major characteristics of distance teaching will be employed with

print and face-to-face tuition featuring prominently at present in the refugee settlements. However, after liberation maximum use will be made of mass information media, including broadcasting.

NEU students in class.

Target Groups

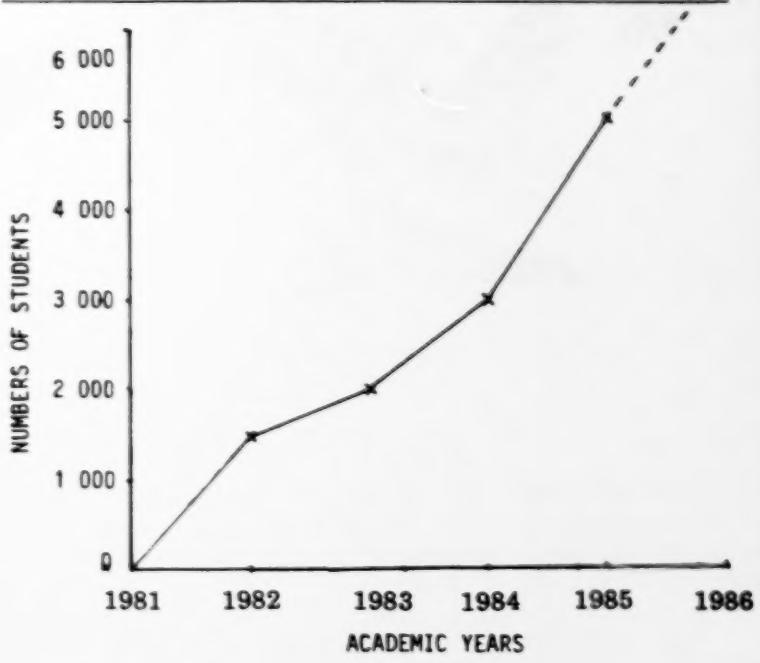
The NEU courses are designed for adult Namibians who did not have the advantage of completing formal basic education due to the constraints put on Namibia by the apartheid regime of South Africa.

In exile, the majority of NEU students are women and youths living in refugee settlements in Zambia and Angola. The Courses are aimed at a target population of about 40 000 who have at least four years of primary education. The NEU students range between

16 and 60 in age. Although there is no age limit above 16 years, below the age of 16 admission to NEU courses is granted only in special circumstances.

The initial courses were launched with an enrolment of 1 500 in 1982. The figure was slightly increased to 2 000 in 1983. But due to the effect of Bantu education in Namibia, the bulk of the potential student population needed the Study Skills Course and Introductory English Course before they enrolled for the first courses. This fact kept enrolment figures at that level. With the printing of the primary courses, enrolment is expected to rise to some 5 000 in 1984/1985.

ENROLMENT FIGURE 1982 - 1985 (PROJECTED TO 1985)



Facilitators

NEU distance learning activities are carried out in the study centres, mainly at Namibia Health and Education Centre in the People's Republic of Angola and the Republic of Zambia.

Although NEU course materials are self instructional, a great deal of external personal assistance is needed to guide the learner in studying the materials.

The chief administrator of the programme in the field is the Field Supervisor. He sees to it that learning materials have been distributed to all the study centres, and carries out overall supervision of studies. He assists the tutors in their tutorial services. He liaises with the Headquarters on student progress programme, problems, and prospects for a future course of action. Directors and Principals at the Health and Education Centres act as Field Supervisors of NEU programmes.

A training workshop for Tutors.

At present NEU employs part-time tutors to assist the students in their studies. These part-time tutors are usually teachers at Namibia Health and Education Centres: others may be centre administrators and officials. The tutors distribute learning materials to several study group leaders whom they supervise. They also hold fortnightly tutorial meetings with the study group leaders to review the previous work, solve problems group leaders might face, and map out plans and lesson preparation for the next two weeks. The tutors mark students' assignments, the terminal tests for each course workbook. The NEU organises induction and training workshops for the tutors in Lusaka and at the Namibia Health and Education Centres, where they live and work. When funds are made available by donors some tutors are sent to the course on Distance Teaching in Developing Countries organised by the International Extension College in association with the Institute of Education, Department of Education in Developing Countries, University of London. Most of the NEU senior staff, (the Co-ordinator, the Course Development Officer and the Acting Field Supervisor, Angola) have attended such a course.

The Study Group Leaders are students themselves with the exception that they are usually one or more classes ahead of the group they lead. The other exception is that they are usually trained in group leadership and the methodology of distance education. They are always provided with the Group Leaders Manual and Group Leaders Notes. In the Manual are practical suggestions on lesson preparation and development in the session and group handling. In the Notes are steps to be taken in conducting exercises and tests and answers to the tests and worksheets. Answers to other exercises are usually included in the workbooks for the students to check their own work.

The group leaders are always present when the group meets. It is the duty of the group leader to "set a stage" for the group learning activities. They collect learning materials and equipment from the tutors and distribute them to students. They conduct the lesson on a face-to-face basis, demonstrating to the students what they should do. Leaders show the students the answers to exercises and check the self-marked students' work. They mark the students tests and worksheets and collect assignment sheets from all the students and hand them to the group tutor for marking. They distribute marked assignments to the group members.

Criteria for selecting Study Group Leaders

Three criteria are used in selecting group leaders.

Firstly, the candidates must have attained some degree of competence over and above their colleagues.

Secondly, the Candidates must be able to speak English fairly well.

And thirdly, they should have some leadership qualities.

Candidates are interviewed and those selected are enrolled for induction and training courses.

Group Leaders in a training session.

Course Production

The NEU course materials are produced in writers' workshops organised by the Unit. NEU staff and teachers from Namibia Health and Education Centres help in the writing. International experts and consultants also participate in the planning and writing of NEU courses. The NEU invites writers from the United Nations Institute for Namibia, the Ministry of General Education and Culture of the Republic of Zambia, the University of Zambia and at times the National Correspondence College, Luanshya. The International Extension College provides consultancy to the Unit and experts to assist with writers' workshops and induction training.

Staff from the Course Development Section of the Unit take full responsibility for editing the NEU course materials. Printing is done at the premises of another organisation in Lusaka. Printed materials are then distributed to the study centres in Angola and Zambia.

Part of a course writing workshop.

Administration

The Namibian Extension Unit is autonomous within the UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR NAMIBIA, with a Co-ordinator as its Executive Head. Its Headquarters is in Lusaka, Zambia. The staff will be, as far as possible, Namibians. However, where Namibians are not available, assistance from outside is sought. For example, for the first three years advisers assist the Co-ordinator in administration and the Course Development Officer in editorial work.

A Board of Project Management controls NEU's finances and policy. It consists of two representatives each of SWAPO, UNIN, and the Zambian Government and one each of the Commonwealth

Secretariat and the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia. It meets at least twice every year to discuss issues concerning the well-being of the Unit and review the Unit's progress.

Mr. Hage G. Geingob, Director of the United Nations Institute for Namibia is the Chairman while Mr. Phillip Daka, Director of Continuing Education, Ministry of General Education and Culture, Government of the Republic of Zambia is the vice-chairman of the Board.

The NEU's Board of Project Management.

International Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is needed to meet administrative, production and distribution costs for the distance learning materials, as well as the training programme for facilitators.

The project is financed by the Commission of the European Communities, the Nordic countries, the Austrian and Netherlands Government and the Ford Foundation, through the UN Fund for Namibia. The CFTC, associated from the outset in planning the scheme, funds two experts at the Unit and provides consultancy services. The Government of the Republic of Zambia is providing free accommodation for the Unit's Headquarters.

More financial assistance is needed to help the Unit to educate victims of racial discrimination.

Logistics

As mentioned earlier the NEU runs courses in both Angola and Zambia. There is not much difficulty in sending materials to the centres in Zambia.

Sending distance teaching materials to Angola requires financial and human resources to organise the transport. In addition, study centres in Angola are scattered over four provinces (Kwanza-Norte, Kwanza-Sul, Huambo, Huila). This presents problems for the NEU staff travelling over wide areas criss-crossing provinces, to ensure that the study programme is effective.

A Land Cruiser was purchased for the purpose of transporting study materials within Angola.

Evaluation

Formative evaluation of the programme is carried out by NEU field staff who are in day-to-day contact with the students. The results of pre- and post-tests are compared to determine course effectiveness and areas in the course that need revision. An internal evaluation exercise will precede the external evaluation of the programme.

STAFFING AT THE NAMIBIAN EXTENSION UNIT

a) **Staff at the Headquarters**

For practical purposes of administration and the production of publications, the NEU maintains a small staff at its Headquarters in Lusaka. As part of economy measures the Board of Project Management decided that all vacant posts at the Unit should be frozen.

The staff at Headquarters are listed below.

Co-ordinator	Executive Head of the Unit
N A Mthoko	(Namibian)
Adviser to Co-ordinator	On Secondment to the Unit by the CFTC.

	Advises on planning, management policy and administration of the Unit. He was formerly Deputy Secretary (Administration) to the Cabinet, Government of the Republic of Zambia.
A J Adamson	(Zambian)
Registrar/Adminstrative Officer	Responsible for day-to-day administrative affairs of the Unit. Formerly Assistant Registrar, University of Zambia.
J Siwabamundi	(Zambian)
Course Development Officer	Responsible for editorial and publication work.
J D'Mbango	(Namibian)
Adviser to Course Development Officer	On secondment to the Unit by the CFTC. Assistant and Adviser in all editorial and publication work. Previously he worked as Course Editor, Department of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education, Botswana.
G D Leech	(British)
English Language Specialist	On secondment to the Unit by the British Council Advising in all matters concerning the use of English as a medium and its teaching. Previously an Inspector of Schools for the Zambian Ministry of Education.
R L Trewby	(British)

In Addition, there are clerical, secretarial and driving staff.

b) **Staff in Centres**

The majority of NEU staff are in the study centres. They consist of Group Leaders, Tutors and two Field Supervisors (one each in Angola and Zambia).

In March 1984, there was a total of 165 but due to the expected rise in enrolment during 1984/85, the number of tutors and group leaders will rise correspondingly.